

The Definitive Book of
BODY LANGUAGE

Allan & Barbara Pease



INTRODUCTION

By a man's fingernails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the calluses of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs, by his movements – by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. That all united should fail to enlighten the competent enquirer in any case is almost inconceivable.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, 1887

As a young boy, I was always aware that what people said was not always what they meant or were feeling and that it was possible to get others to do what I wanted if I read their real feelings and responded appropriately to their needs. At the age of eleven, I began my sales career selling rubber sponges door-to-door after school to make pocket money and quickly worked out how to tell if someone was likely to buy from me or not. When I knocked on a door, if someone told me to go away but their hands were open and they showed their palms, I knew it was safe to persist with my presentation because, despite how dismissive they may have sounded, they weren't aggressive. If someone told me to go away in a soft voice but used a pointed finger or closed hand, I knew it was time to leave. I loved being a salesperson and was excellent at it. As a teenager, I became a pots and pans salesperson, selling at night, and my ability to read people earned me enough money to buy my first piece of property. Selling gave me the opportunity to meet people and study them at close range and to evaluate whether they would buy or not, simply by watching their body language. This skill also proved a bonanza for

meeting girls in discos. I could nearly always predict who would say ‘yes’ to a dance with me and who wouldn’t.

I joined the life insurance business at the age of twenty, and went on to break several sales records for the firm I worked for, becoming the youngest person to sell over a million dollars’ worth of business in my first year. This achievement qualified me for the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table in the USA. As a young man I was fortunate that the techniques I’d learned as a boy in reading body language while selling pots and pans could be transferred to this new area, and was directly related to the success I could have in any venture involving people.

All Things Are Not What They Seem

The ability to work out what is really happening with a person is simple - not easy, but simple. It’s about matching what you see and hear in the environment in which it all happens and drawing probable conclusions. Most people, however, only see the things they think they are seeing.

Here’s a story to demonstrate the point:

Two men were walking through the woods when they came across a big deep hole.

‘Wow...that looks deep,’ says one. ‘Let’s toss a few pebbles in and see how deep it is.’

They threw in a few pebbles and waited, but there was no sound.

‘Gee – that is a *really* deep hole. Let’s throw one of these big rocks in. That should make a noise.’

They picked up two football-sized rocks and tossed them into the hole and waited, but still they heard nothing.

‘There’s a railway sleeper over here in the weeds,’ said one. ‘If we toss that in, it’s *definitely* going to make some noise.’ They dragged the heavy sleeper over to the hole and heaved it in, but not a sound came from the hole.

Suddenly, out of the nearby woods, a goat appeared,

running like the wind. It rushed towards the two men and ran right between them, running as fast as its legs could go. Then it leaped into the air and disappeared into the hole. The two men stood there, astonished at what they'd just seen.

Out of the woods came a farmer who said, 'Hey! Did you guys see my goat?'

'You bet we did! It was the craziest thing we've ever seen! It came running like the wind out of the woods and jumped into that hole!'

'Nah,' says the farmer. 'That couldn't have been my goat. My goat was chained to a railway sleeper!'

How Well Do You Know the Back of Your Hand?

Sometimes we say we know something 'like the back of our hand' but experiments prove that less than 5% of people can identify the back of their hands from a photograph. The results of a simple experiment we conducted for a television programme showed that most people are generally not good at reading body language signals either. We set up a large mirror at the end of a long hotel lobby, giving the illusion that, as you entered the hotel, there was a long corridor going through the hotel and out the back of the lobby. We hung large plants from the ceiling to a distance of 5 feet above the floor so that, as each person entered the lobby, it looked as if another person was entering at the same time from the other end. The 'other person' was not readily recognisable because the plants covered their face, but you could clearly see their body and movement. Each guest observed the other 'guest' for five to six seconds before turning left to the reception desk. When asked if they had recognised the other 'guest', 85% of men answered 'no'. Most men had failed to recognise themselves in a mirror, one saying, 'You mean that fat, ugly guy?' Unsurprisingly, 58% of the women said it was a mirror and 30% said the other 'guest' looked 'familiar'.

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*Most men and nearly half of all women
don't know what they look like from the neck down.*

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How Well Can You Spot Body Language Contradictions?

People everywhere have developed a fascination with the body language of politicians because everyone knows that politicians sometimes pretend to believe in something that they don't believe in, or infer that they are someone other than who they really are. Politicians spend much of their time ducking, dodging, avoiding, pretending, lying, hiding their emotions and feelings, using smokescreens or mirrors and waving to imaginary friends in the crowd. But we instinctively know that they will eventually be tripped up by contradictory body language signals, so we love to watch them closely, in anticipation of catching them out.

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*What signal alerts you that a politician is lying?
His lips are moving.*

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For another television show, we conducted an experiment with the co-operation of a local tourist bureau. Tourists entered the bureau to ask for information about local sight-seeing and other tourist attractions. They were directed to a counter where they spoke with a tourism officer, a man with blond hair, a moustache, wearing a white shirt and tie. After a few minutes discussing possible itineraries, the man bent down out of sight below the counter to get some brochures. Then, another man with a clean-shaven face, dark hair and wearing a blue shirt appeared from beneath the counter holding the brochures. He continued the discussion from exactly where the first man had left off. Remarkably, around half the

tourists failed to notice the change and men were twice as likely as women to completely miss the change, not only in body language but in the appearance of a completely new person! Unless you have an innate ability or have learned to read body language, the chances are you're missing most of it too. This book will show you what you've been missing.

How We Wrote This Book

Barbara and I have written *The Definitive Book of Body Language* using my original book, *Body Language*, as our base. Not only have we considerably expanded on that one, we have also introduced research from new scientific disciplines, such as evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology as well as technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), which shows what happens in the brain. We have written it in a style that means it can be opened and read on almost any page at random. We've kept the content mainly to the movement of the body, expressions and gestures, because these are the things you need to learn to get the most out of every face-to-face encounter. *The Definitive Book of Body Language* will make you more aware of your own non-verbal cues and signals, and will show you how to use them to communicate effectively and how to get the reactions you want.

This book isolates and examines each component of body language and gesture in simple terms to make it accessible to you. Few gestures are made in isolation of others however, so we have also, at the same time, tried to avoid oversimplifying things.

There will always be those who throw up their hands in horror and claim that the study of body language is just another means by which scientific knowledge can be used to exploit or dominate others by reading their secrets or thoughts. We feel however, that this book seeks to give you

greater insight into communication with your fellow humans, so that you can have a deeper understanding of other people and, therefore, of yourself. Understanding how something works makes living with it easier, whereas ignorance and lack of understanding promote fear and superstition and make us more critical of others. A birdwatcher doesn't study birds so that he can shoot them down and keep them as trophies. In the same way, the knowledge and skills in body language serve to make every encounter with another person an exciting experience.

For the purpose of simplicity, and unless otherwise stated, the use of 'he' or 'him' will apply equally to both genders.

Your Body Language Dictionary

The original book was intended as a working manual for sales people, managers, negotiators and executives, but this one can be used for any aspect of your life, be it at home, on a date or at work. *The Definitive Book of Body Language* is the result of over 30 years of our cumulative knowledge and involvement in this field and we give you the basic 'vocabulary' you need to read attitudes and emotions. This book will give you answers to some of the most puzzling questions you've ever had about why people use some of the behaviours they do, and it will change forever your own behaviour. It will seem as if you've always been in a dark room and, while you could always feel the furnishings, the wall hangings and the door, you've never actually seen what they look like. This book will be like turning on the lights to see what was always there. But now, you'll know exactly what things are, where they are and what to do about them.

Allan Pease